

Representative Larsen's Work to Support the Point Roberts Community

Point Roberts, Washington, is a small community in the United States connected by land only to Canada. Residents of Point Roberts can only reach the mainland United States via a new twice-weekly passenger-only ferry or by driving through Canada, requiring residents to cross the international border four times on each round trip.

The COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted Point Roberts due to the border closure, leaving residents isolated from the United States and without access to necessary resources.

Below is a list of actions I have taken to support the Point Roberts community during the past year.

ISSUE

MY WORK TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF THE POINT ROBERTS COMMUNITY

Access to Necessary Resources

Point Roberts lacks necessary resources such as medical offices, expanded grocery options and retail.

- I have raised the unique concerns of the Point Roberts community with senior Canadian officials, including Canadian Consul General Brandon Lee and U.S. Consul General Brent Hardt.
- In August of 2020, the Port of Bellingham used \$47,250 of CARES relief dollars from Whatcom County to fund a passenger ferry from Point Roberts to Bellingham. This provided an additional mode of transportation from Point Roberts to the United States that did not require a border crossing.
- On August 10, 2020, I signed a letter to Acting Ambassador to Canada Richard Mills to request the Canadian Border Services Agency allow for U.S. citizens to travel between Point Roberts and the rest of Whatcom County.
- On December 3, 2020, I wrote a letter to Speaker Pelosi and Leader Schumer to request funding in the next COVID relief package for border communities that have been significantly impacted by travel restrictions.
- On February 5, 2021, I wrote a letter to Speaker Pelosi and Leader Schumer requesting a set aside of funding for border communities in the American Rescue Plan.

Reuniting with Family

Point Roberts residents often have family in both the United States and Canada. The border closure has kept families apart for more than a year.

- I met with a delegation of Canadian members of parliament to discuss future travel across the Canadian border.
- On February 22, 2021, I signed a letter to President Biden requesting the U.S. reciprocate travel exemptions to allow for Canadian travelers to reunite with family and loved ones in the United States.

Support for Small Business

Point Roberts businesses have suffered an 85 percent loss in retail shoppers since the border closure.

- 26 businesses in Point Roberts were able to use the first round of PPP loans, saving 89 jobs in the community.
- CARES provided relief funding to state and local governments. Whatcom County used \$2.6 million of its CARES dollars to fund small business grants, including \$45,000 for three businesses in Point Roberts.
- In Whatcom County CARES also distributed \$2.7 million for rental relief, \$1.8 million for food bank distribution and \$4.15 million for schools to continue teaching safely and begin preparations to reopen classrooms for students.

Next Steps for Point Roberts and Border Communities

Point Roberts residents continue to suffer due to the closure of the border

- I will continue to push the White House to allow for Canadian citizens to visit their family members in the United States.
- I will highlight the needs of Point Roberts residents in my work with Canadian leaders and urge joint development of new safety measures to allow cross-border travel to resume.
- I will work to ensure Point Roberts residents and border communities receive the support they need by increasing vaccine availability, providing additional funding to small businesses and ensuring schools are able to operate safely.